DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 689 CE 056 783

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TITLE Project T.E.A.M. (Technical Education Advancement Modules). Interpersonal and Communication Skills.
INSTITUTION Greenville Technical Coll., S.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 90
CONTRACT V199A90094-89
NOTE 52p.; For related training modules, see CE 056 779-788.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Assertiveness; Career Choice; Career Education; *Communication Skills; *Conflict Resolution; Course Content; Employment Interviews; Employment Potential; Futures (of Society); *Interpersonal Competence; Job Skills; Secondary Education; Speech Communication; *Technical Education; Technical Occupations; Technological Advancement; Two Year Colleges; Units of Study

ABSTRACT

This module was developed by Project TEAM (Technical Education Advancement Modules), a cooperative demonstration program for high technology training for unemployed, underemployed, and existing industrial employees needing upgrading. The module is a 6-hour overview course intended to develop competencies in the following interpersonal and communication skills: understanding the communication process and its effective use; listening as a means to improved communication; team building; conflict management; assertiveness as a communication strategy; and interviewing. The manual serves as a student outline and as an instructor guide. It includes information sheets, role-playing exercises, fill-in forms, and other learning activities. (KC)

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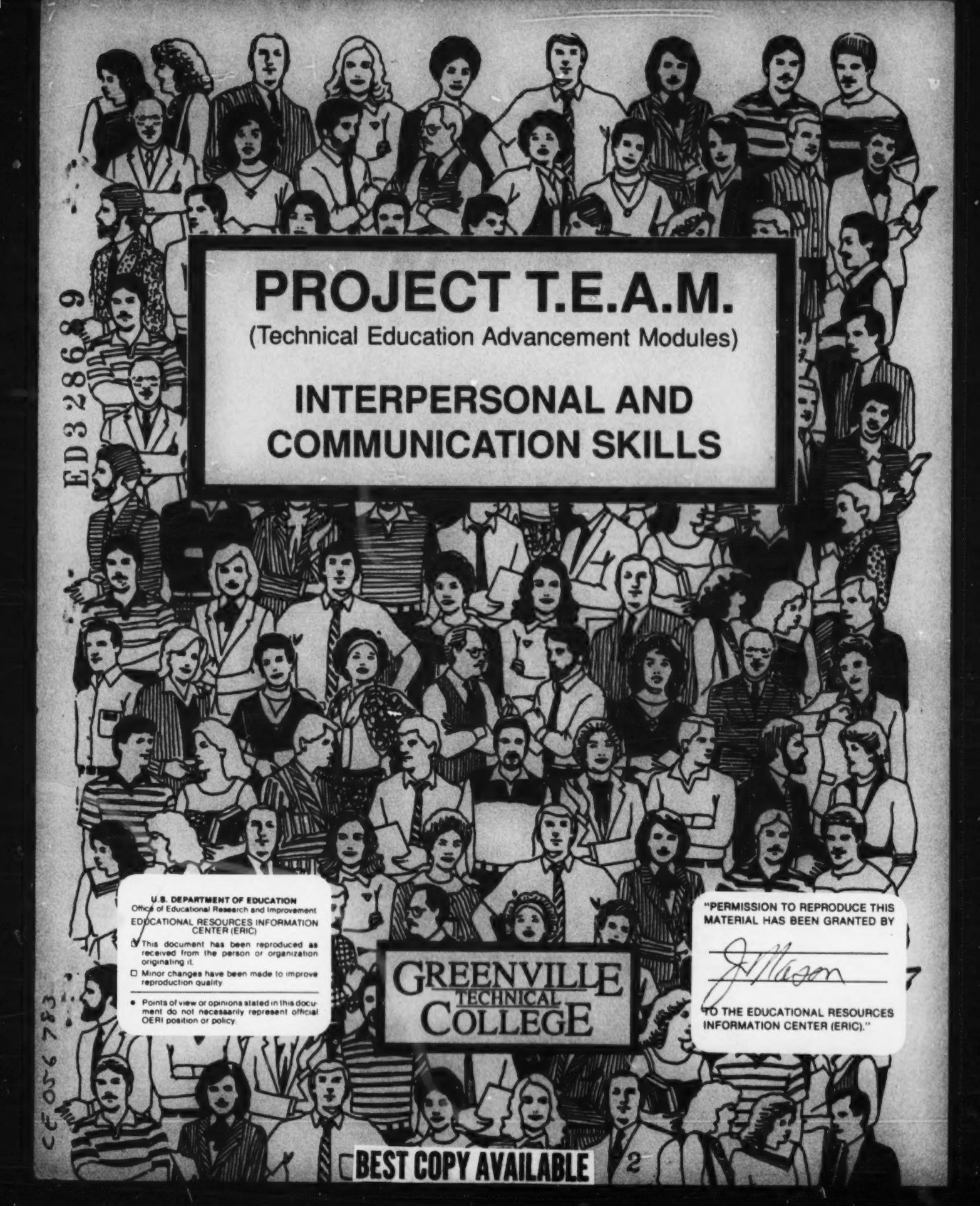

PROJECT T.E.A.M.

(Technical Education Advancement Modules)

INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ED328689

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PROJECT TEAM
TECHNICAL EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT MODULES

INSTRUCTIONAL MODULE:

INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developed by:

Joan S. Mason, Career Advancement Center, Greenville Technical College

Funded by:

Cooperative Demonstration Program CFDA No. 84.199A
U.S. Department of Education
1989-1990
(Federal share $280,345 [75%]; College share $133,650 [25%])

Introduction:

The purpose of this manual is to serve as an instructional guide for the TEAM Grant module Interpersonal and Communication Skills.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills is a six hour overview course intended to develop competencies in the following skill areas:

Understanding the Communication Process
and Its Effective Use
Listening as a Means To Improved Communication
Team Building
Conflict Management
Assertiveness as a Communication Strategy
Interviewing

Overview of Project TEAM:

Project TEAM (Technical Education Advancement Modules) is a program targeted toward the unemployed, underemployed, and existing industrial employees who are in need of upgrading basic technical competencies. The program seeks to give adequate preparatory educational opportunities in generic technical skill areas and to create a public awareness of the need for these basic skills. Curriculum content was determined by an assessment team of local industrial employers. Their evaluation resulted in the development of 15 instructional modules; some of which may be industry specific, but most of which are applicable in and necessary to a majority of industrial settings. The modules may be used collectively or as a separate curriculum for a specific course or courses. The material contained in each manual will serve as a student outline and as an instructor guide which may be used selectively or in its entirety.

I. COMMUNICATION

A. Definition: The process by which we give or exchange thoughts, opinions, or information through speech, writing, or other means.

B. Why is Communication Important?

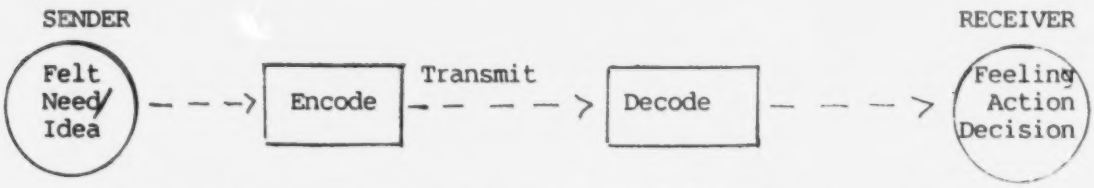
Without communication, an individual would function totally within a vacuum. Obviously, in a work environment, the need for communication would be on several levels:

worker/worker **worker/supervisor** **worker/public**

And the needs may relate to a variety of areas:

how to's **personal information**
policies/facts **opinions/feelings**

C. How We Communicate: The Communication Process



1. Encode - how we let others know what we are thinking or feeling

Methods: Verbal
Written
Body Language

All methods will be discussed later

2. Transmit - sending the message

Methods: face to face letter meetings
telephone memo

3. Decode - how we receive and interpret messages

Methods: read - see
listen - hear
touch - smell

Having received the message, we then develop some set of feelings about it and decide on the action to be taken as a result of the message.

D. Types of Communication

We have looked at the need for communication and the process through which it occurs; now let's focus on the types of communication we may seek to employ.

First, focusing on the sender -

1. Verbal 2. Nonverbal 3. Written

1. Verbal Communication

Role of sender is to get the message across - to have the receiver understand the message in the same way you intended it.

Sending Skills:

a. Set the scene - organize yourself

1. Know what you want to accomplish -- should the receiver learn something, do something, or develop a certain attitude (or all three)?

2. Present the message at a time when the receiver can and will be willing to listen.

3. Choose the proper location for your communication. If it is a lengthy conversation, make sure you won't be interrupted; if it's not for everyone to hear, look for privacy.

4. Comfort - put receiver at ease to question or respond

b. Enunciate clearly

Don't:	Do:
slur words	speak distinctly
speak softly	keep volume at appropriate level
use unfamiliar words	show interest in subject
	be energetic and enthusiastic about your delivery

c. Notify the Receiver on Important Points

Avoid surprising the receiver (and having your message misunderstood) by adhering to the following:

1. Let the receiver know approximately how long the conversation will take

2. Explain your topic first - don't disguise it

3. Present your information in a logical order

4. Let the receiver know the importance of key statements - this can be done either verbally or with nonverbal cues

d. Solicit Feedback

Setting a comfortable atmosphere for communication will insure that the receiver is willing to offer his point of view. Try to get verbal feedback, as well as nodding and other nonverbal clues.

e. Eliminate Unnecessary Information

Don't overtalk -- get to the point

f. Prepare your message for the receiver

What you have to say should be presented from the receiver's point of view, not from your own. Don't talk just to hear yourself. It is his understanding you are after.

2. Nonverbal Communication

Actions speak louder than words.
Your demeanor affects people's estimation of you and how they respond to you.
To effectively send your message, you need to present the spoken facts and words in a positive enthusiastic manner that will be readily accepted by the receiver.

Effective Nonverbal Cues:

a. A generally assured manner which projects an attitude of confidence in yourself, yet concern for the receiver.

b. A firm, well-modulated, relaxed voice. Vary your volume and pitch enough to be interesting, but keep control.

c. Use good eye contact. Look directly at the person with whom you are speaking.

d. Demonstrate good posture. Stand up straight, but do not appear stiff or tense. An erect relaxed posture shows confidence and control.

e. Gestures should be relaxed motions. Don't fidget with your hands or use harsh abrupt actions. Be positive with your body language.

f. Facial expressions should project your confidence and also show acceptance of the receiver.

g. Dress and grooming should be appropriate to the situation.

3. Written Communication

a. When You Need To Use Written Communication

1. When You Need Documentation. Matters concerning money, safety, equal opportunity or other policies often need to be formalized with a written record. Any subject which might be easily misunderstood should be put in writing for better clarification.

2. When You Need to Inform Several People At Once. If the communication is one-way, with no feedback needed, a memo or brief letter with multiple copies can save time.

3. When Information Needs to be Permanent and Easily Retrievable. Spoken communication is generally not maintained, whereas a filing system allows for easy access to written information.

4. When Your Message is Complex. Complicated facts and data are hard to absorb if heard only once. Writing such information permits more thorough study.

5. When You need to Organize and Clarify Your Own Thinking. Ordering and writing out information helps you to understand the situation better, just as is does for the reader.

b. Reader Acceptance:

Remember, the purpose of communication is to transmit information to the receiver. You need to be certain that what you write has the best possible chance of being read. To assure this, be sure to address the following:

1. What is the main point?
2. Why should the reader be interested?
3. What action is desired from the reader?

c. Points for Effective Writing

1. Determine Your Purpose. Considering the three points above should result in a clearly defined objective.

2. Plan the length of your communication. Any business correspondence is best left brief and to the point.

3. Relate to the Reader. Your style of writing and vocabulary should be influenced by your knowledge of who will read your work.

4. Write the Communication. Actual writing follows careful planning. A reliable format to use is to:

a. State the purpose of your letter, memo, or report in the first sentence

b. Include brief introductory remarks to orient your reader to your main topic

c. Present supporting facts and statements

d. Close with your conclusion and/or recommendations

e. Writing Checklist

As a yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of your written communication, consider how you addressed the following points:

Does your writing:

____ Make the purpose known at the start?
____ Inform, persuade and interest the reader?
____ Use everyday words and phrases?
____ Avoid worn out phrases and cliches?
____ Use simple sentences?
____ Include friendly personal references?
____ Trim the fat.
____ Avoid repetition?
____ Use active voice, not passive?
____ Come quickly to the point?
____ Provide ample supporting statements or data?
____ Stress the positive?
____ Provide all needed information (who, what, when, where, why, how)?
____ Use correct spelling?
____ Show good organization of thought and content?
____ Include your personal signature?

5. Proofread Your Writing. Look for mistakes both in grammar and message. To assure clarity, have someone else read it first for their suggestions. Check your spelling.

6. Edit. Review and rework for clarity and impact.

II. LISTENING

A. Definition: Listening - Obtaining meaning from a situation in which the spoken word conveys meaning.

Our culture stresses speaking skills: be eloquent, be clear, be commanding, motivate, create interest, communicate, express yourself! The successful person is the person who speaks well - has a big vocabulary. We picture the successful communicator as the person who always has the right word at the right time - the eloquent speaker or the effective writer. But, the effective reader and the effective listener are also effective communicators.

B. Benefits to Effective Listening

1. More and better information on which to base decisions.
2. Fewer mistakes.
3. Better use of time.
4. A chance to learn more.
5. A better understanding of self and others.
6. Better communication.
7. Greater cooperation.
8. Others added by group.

Consider, too, the consequences of not listening effectively.

Have the group suggest this list. Then stress the fact that all employers seek those who can listen and follow directions. The following exercise tests your ability to follow both oral and written directions.

Following Directions Exercise:

Oral Directions -

In the next exercise, we are going to explore following directions. You will have only three minutes to complete this exercise. Be sure you read everything before you begin work on any of the tasks listed. Turn your paper over and start now.

In conclusion, have the group explore reasons for not following simple directions.

CAN YOU FOLLOW DIRECTIONS?

(Time limit: 3 min.)

1. Read everything before doing anything.
2. Put your name in the upper right hand corner of this paper.
3. Circle the word "NAME" in sentence two.
4. Draw five small squares in the upper left hand corner of this paper.
5. Put an "X" in each square.
6. Sign your name under the title of this paper.
7. Put a circle around sentence five.
8. Put an "X" in the lower left hand corner of this paper.
9. Draw a triangle around the "X" you first put down.
10. Draw a rectangle around the word "PAPER" in sentence number four.
11. Loudly call out your name when you get to this point in the test.

If you think you have followed directions carefully to this point call out, "I HAVE."

12. On the reverse side of this paper, add 8950 and 9805.
13. On the reverse side of this paper, circle your answer and put a square around the circle.
14. Count out in your normal speaking voice backwards from 10 to 1.
15. Punch three small holes in the top of this paper with your pencil point.
16. If you are the first person to get this far, call out loudly, "I AM THE FIRST PERSON TO REACH THIS POINT, AND I AM THE LEADER IN FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS."
17. Underline all even numbers on this page.
18. Say out loud, "I AM NEARLY FINISHED, I HAVE FOLLOWED DIRECTIONS."
19. Now that you have finished reading carefully, do ONLY SENTENCE TWO.

C. What is Listening?

1. Listening is a search for meaning.
2. It is an active process, unlike simply hearing, which is passive.
3. It is an intellectual exercise - you are trying to get meaning from the speaker.
4. Listening requires intense concentration to remain constantly alert for meaning.
5. You must want to listen - you listen because of what is in it for you - the benefits you will derive.

D. Blocks to Effective Listening

1. External Distractions
   a. Interruption (phone/people)
   b. Background noise
   c. Too lengthy presentation
   d. A confusing presentation
2. Internal Distractions
   a. Preoccupation with other tasks/thoughts
   b. Pressure - not enough time
   c. Priorities - other things must be handled first
3. The Difficulty of the Task
4. Not Wanting to Hear Differing Points of View
5. Wanting to Enter Discussions or Argue Without Listening First
6. Lack of Interest in Subject or Speaker - We may pretend to listen
7. The Difficulty in Assimilating Meanings (thinking) as Fast as Speaker Can Talk.
8. Lack of Confidence in Our Listening Skills

E. Active Listening Skills

Two Steps in Active Listening

1. You must analyze what is being said - break the message down and understand the meaning of the message.
2. You must synthesize the message - rebuild the message so that it has meaning for you.

Each step has several parts:

1. Analyzing the Message

   a. Identify at once the main part of the message.

   b. Then listen for supporting points.

      This allows you to break the conversation down into the important pieces of information it contains.

   c. Look for key words - words which describe a situation or happening.

   d. Listen for statements that support a point of view -

      pros/cons advantages/disadvantages

      likes/dislikes similarities/differences

      Example: A coworker approaches you with the following information:

"I am having problems with Frank Williams. Frank has been late for work three times this week. He tends to work slowly. He spends time on the phone. He seems easily distracted. Frank used to be a good worker. He used to care about this job - or at least the one he was working on before I moved him. Now I do not know about Frank."

Pick out the main point.
This worker is having problems with Frank Williams.
Key Words: Late for work
works slowly
spends lot of time on phone
easily distracted
Points of View: used to be good worker
cared about last job more than present

2. Synthesize the Message - Interactive Listening

Rebuild the pieces so that it makes sense to you.
Like assembling a jigsaw puzzle.
Through active listening you acquire the message puzzle parts. Then you work with these pieces of information and fit them into place to reconstruct the message in such a way as to obtain its full meaning.

   a. Question the message so that you can get an understanding of its logic, the order of occurrences and any missing pieces of information. Include: who, what, where, why, how

   b. Stop the speaker from time to time and summarize what he said in your own words. This allows you to verify what the speaker has said and to clarify your interpretation of what has been said. It allows you to make the information work for you.

F. Summary: Effective Listening Tips

1. Stop talking
2. Act and look interested
3. Put yourself in the other person's shoes
4. Be patient
5. Do not doodle
6. Remove distractions
7. Go easy on arguments or criticism
8. Ask questions
9. Put the speaker at ease
10. Stop talking

Outside assignment:

To help you apply your listening skills on the job, report on at least one conversation you have with someone else this week. Use the Listening Form included here as an aid to your reporting.

LISTENING FORM

Person Speaking: _____ DATE: _____

Major Point: _____

Supporting points:

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

How:

Additional Notes:

Summary of Conversation:

III. TEAM BUILDING

1. Introduction: Team Building is one of many possible organizational structures. If working in groups is good for the individual and for the organization's goals, team building is a good choice. Many companies like this approach and it is good to be aware of what it is and how you would fit in as a Team member.

2. Definition - a team is a group of individuals who must work interdependently in order to attain their individual and organizational objectives.

   Four essential characteristics:

   a. Must have reason for working together
   b. Members must be interdependent - need each other's experience, ability, and commitment in order to reach their mutual goal
   c. Members must believe that working as a group is more effective than working in isolation
   d. The group must be accountable as a unit within a larger organizational structure

3. Team Effectiveness

   a. Leadership - whether autocratic or participative, there must be a leader capable of directing individual effort into group output and also capable of providing the necessary communication link between the team and the total organization.

   b. Group Dynamics

      Teamwork depends on the effective interaction of members

      1. Contact - each individual must be willing to exchange views and ideas; the working environment must be relaxed and friendly (accepting)

      2. Role - each member has and understands his individual function; each member is aware of his relationship to the group and its overall objective

   c. Values

      All decisions, whether made by individuals or the group, are value based.

      1. Task Effectiveness - the focus is on the group objective, the end result, rather than on the continuing activity of the group

      2. Dealing in the Present - concentrate on what is happening, not why

      3. Conflict is an asset - working with conflict rather than trying to avoid it, provides energy and is a major source of creativity

4. Benefit of Team Approach

a. Synergy - The combined energy of a group is always potentially greater than the sum of the energies of its members. Working together works.

b. Interdependence - Organizational goals are generally too complex to be accomplished by simply combining individual roles

c. Support Base - The team provides a social and emotional support group for its members; thus producing a more satisfying and work productive environment

Note to instructor: For a generic module, an overview of Team Building should be sufficient. If a further analysis of group dynamics or group interaction is desired, a survival exercise requiring group consensus may be used. In that case, also include an analysis of group roles.

IV. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

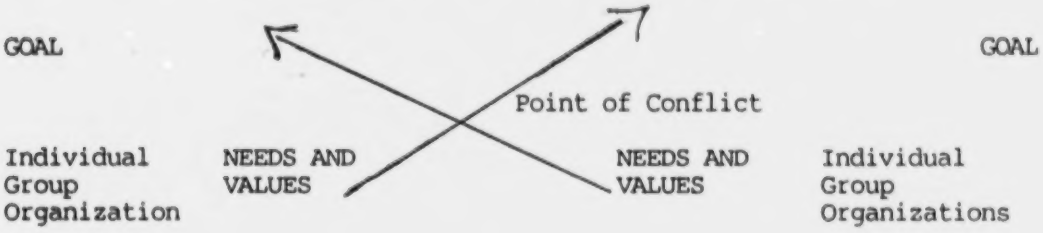
1. Definition of Conflict: an antagonistic state or action of differing ideas, interests, or persons

2. Conflict model:

Every person, organization or group is moving toward some goal. The way they reach that goal is based on some internal set of needs and values.

At the same time, and in the same environment, there are other people, groups, and organizations trying to reach their goals, which are based on their internalized needs and values.

When these divergent groups cross and must compete for resources, effort or time in order to reach their goals, conflict arises.



3. Sample Sources of Conflict on the Job

a. Competition for resources - for better equipment, more employees, more supplies

b. Required changes - demands made on you from other levels within the organization

c. Vague job descriptions - overlapping responsibilities

d. Different personal values, needs, goals - personality traits

4. Methods of Dealing With People

a. Avoidance
Avoidance strategies do have survival value in those instances where escape is possible. They usually do not provide the individual with a high level of satisfaction and they certainly do not provide the individual with practice in other methods of conflict resolution.

b. Defusion
This tactic is essentially a delaying action. Defusion strategies try to cool off a situation or to keep the issues so unclear that attempts at confrontation are unlikely. These tactics work when

delay is possible and/or when a recurrence of the same situation in the same group is improbable. Typically they result in feelings of dissatisfaction and concerns about the future and oneself.

c. Confrontation
The third major strategy involves an actual confrontation of the conflicting issues or persons. Confrontation can be divided into two distinct substrategies.

d. Power
Power strategies result in the I win/you lose situation. In these, the party with the most power wins the battle; often the war has just begun. Hostility, fear, anxiety, and real physical damage may result to the loser. These forces are not forgotten and lie in wait for the opportunity to turn the win/lose tables around.

e. Negotiation
Negotiation strategies, often referred to as win/win, allow both sides of the conflict to benefit in its resolution. The aim of negotiation is to resolve the conflict with a solution that is satisfying to all parties involved. It provides the most positive and least negative by-products of all conflict resolution strategies.

5. Constructively Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace

Conflict is inevitable. While it can be a source of energy and creativity, it can produce in some individuals a buildup of negative feelings. Companies can reduce this negative impact by making available to workers communication systems and grievance procedures. Workers need to take advantage of these resources.

a. Suggestion Box - This should be an anonymous system for allowing for complaints. The company can deal with the situation and not necessarily with people.

b. Open Door Policy - There should be a clear system for allowing for the expression of grievances from one level to a higher administrative level. This is often provided, but does not always work.

c. Personnel Counselors - many large organizations hire psychologists to act as employee counselors, providing a resource for assistance outside of the formal chain of command.

d. Other: group meetings
scheduled interviews
surveys

6. Managerial Steps to Ending Conflict

When conflict has reached a point where resolution is required, proper managerial techniques should be invoked. Regardless of your role in the conflict, you should be aware of this process.

a. Get the Facts: Management must obtain and record all pertinent information regarding the situation.

b. Analyze and Decide: With the problem defined and the facts in hand, the manager must evaluate them. A recurring problem may simply need a reference to company policy. Unusual issues might need further consultation with superiors.

c. Apply a Solution: Management must take a stand, but all involved need to be provided with a thorough explanation of any and all decisions made.

d. Follow up: Management needs to stay aware of the situation to be certain that the conflict has in fact been settled. If a problem still exists, the cycle of analysis should be repeated.

V. ASSERTIVENESS AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

1. A Guide to Assertive Behavior

a. Three Behavioral Styles: Definitions Follow

b. Components of Assertive Behavior

Assertive behavior is expressing honest feelings comfortably. This allows you to show empathy, make your own choices, and stand up for your rights without hurting others. By being assertive you gain more respect for yourself and others respect you for standing up for your rights. Using this behavior you are more likely to achieve your goals and take responsibility for your actions; you will still feel good about yourself even if your goals are not met. Use "I" statements other than "You" to take responsibility for your feelings rather than blaming others.

Aggressive behavior is expressing your feelings and reaching your goals by hurting others. By being aggressive you make choices for others, humiliate others and usually end up feeling angry, self-righteous and possibly guilty. You may achieve your goal for the moment but you usually end up feeling frustrated, bitter, and alone.

Passive behavior is keeping your feelings to yourself and ignoring your rights to express yourself. You allow others to make choices for you which leaves you feeling angry, anxious, disappointed with yourself and resentful. You don't achieve your goals or feel good about yourself; therefore, anger builds up.

Passive-aggressive behavior is a combination of passive and aggressive. You are passive by not expressing your feelings when something happens, then later you take out your feelings in other ways toward that person. People will not be able to deal with you because they do not know what you really feel. This type behavior hurts both people.

Components of Assertive Behavior: Eye Contact, Body Posture, Distance/Physical Space, Gestures, Voice-Tone and Volume, Listening, Content, and Timing

c. Comparison of Passive, Assertive, Aggressive Behavior Styles below:

	PASSIVE	ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE
TONE OF VOICE	Weak, Soft, Whimpy, Hesitant.	Calm and firm. In control.	Loud, harsh, Demanding.
EYE CONTACT	Avoid it. Look away.	Relaxed. Eye to Eye.	Glaring, Piercing, Eyeball to Eyeball
POSTURE	Slumped, Slouched, Lean away.	Erect, Relaxed, Respect others' space.	Rigid, Lean into others, Invade others' space.
GESTURES	Nervous, Wring hands, Bite nails, etc...	Natural to person.	Forceful, Point finger, Hands on hips, etc...
NEEDS MET	Indirectly, Masters of the hint, "I sure would like to eat out, but if everyone else wants to stay home, I guess that is O.K."	Directly, Lay cards on table, "I would like to eat out tonight. Who would like to go with me?"	Demanding, "I don't care what you're doing. We are going out to eat."
REACTIONS IN CONFLICT STATEMENTS	Withdraw, Use words like "we" and "they" to avoid responsibility.	Face crisis head on. Use "I" statements to to take responsibility	Attack and blame others. Use "You" statements to avoid taking responsibility.
OTHERS FEEL	Sympathy, Disgust, Frustration, Anger.	Respect, Trust, Anger.	Humiliated, Defensive, Angry, Wants to avoid.
THAT PERSON FEELS	Low self-confidence Unworthy, Like a doormat.	Confident, Likes self.	Good on outside, but deep down feels insecure.
BELIEF SYSTEM	"I'm not O.K., but you are."	"I'm O.K., you're O.K."	"I'm O.K., but you're not O.K."
WHO MAKES CHOICES	Others make choices for this person.	This person makes choices for self.	This person makes choices for self and others.
ARE NEEDS MET?	Not usually. If they do, it's only a fluke.	Usually, but even if they don't, they will still feel good about self because they said how they felt, got their feelings out, and gave it their best shot.	Sometimes, but may be sabotaged later.

2. Situational Responses

Complete the Situational Response sheet which follows as a classroom exercise.

SITUATIONAL RESPONSES

Key: If response is passive, write the word passive.
If response is assertive, write the word assertive.
If response is aggressive, write the word aggressive.

Situation	Response	
1. Husband gets silent, instead of sayings what's on his mind. You say...	You seem quiet. I'd like to hear what's on your mind	____
2. An attendant at a gas station you frequently stop at for gas neglected to replace your gas cap. You notice this and return to inquire about it and you say...	One of you guys here forgot to put my gas cap back on! I want it found now or you will buy me a new one	____
3. You'd like a raise and say...	Do you think, ah, you could see your way clear to giving me a raise?	____
4. Someone asks for a ride home and it is inconvenient because you're late, have a few errands, and the drive will take you out of your way. You say...	I am pressed for time today and can take you to a convenient bus stop, but I won't be able to take you home.	____
5. Your husband promised you that he would talk to your daughter about her behavior at school. The promise has not been carried out. You say...	I thought we agreed last Tuesday that you would talk with Ann about her behavior at school. So far there's been no action on your part. I still think you should talk to her soon. I'd prefer sometime tonight.	____
6. A committee meeting is being established. The time is convenient for other people, but not for you. The times are set when it will be next to impossible for you to attend regularly. When asked about the time, you say...	Well, I guess it's OK, but I'm not going to be able to attend very much, but if it fits everyone else's schedule...	____
7. In conversation, a man suddenly says, "What do you women libbers want anyway?" The woman responds...	Fairness and equality	____

Situation	Response
8. You've been talking for a while with a friend on the telephone. You would like to end the conversation and you say...	I'm terribly sorry, my doorbell's ringing, and I have to get off the phone. I hope you don't mind. _____
9. At a meeting one person often interrupts when you're speaking. You say...	I would really appreciate you allowing me to finish. _____
10. You are in a hard-sell clothing store, and you have been pressured to purchase an item. You say...	Well, OK, I'm really not sure, but I suppose I will get it. _____
11. A blind person approaches and asks you to purchase some light bulbs which you really don't need. You respond...	I really don't need any, but I guess I could buy one or two to help you out. _____
12. Teenager is asked to do laundry. As the child puts laundry in the washer, parent says...	Don't forget to balance the load. Make sure you push the right buttons. You just never do things right! _____
13. You have been pestered several times this week by a caller who has repeatly tried to sell you magazines. The caller contacts you again with the same magazine proposition. You say...	This is the third time I've been disturbed and each time I've told you that I'm not interested in subscribing to any magazine. I want you to know that if you call again, I'm going to report this to the Better Business Bureau. _____
14. You're mad at your husband for something he did this morning, but you haven't told him. He's leaving town on an extended business trip later this evening and asked you to pick up his business suits at the cleaners. As he's packing his suitcase, he asks for his suits, which you decided not to pick up. You say...	Oh my goodness - I've been so busy! I guess it just slipped my mind. _____
15. Wife tells husband she'd like to return to school. He doesn't want her to do this and says...	You must be crazy to come up with such a stupid idea! Your place is at home with the kids and the housework. _____
16. Husband expects dinner on the table when he arrives home from work and gets angry when it is not there immediately. You say...	I know you are tired and hungry, but so am I. I would appreciate it if you'd help me, and we'll eat sooner.

Situation	Responses	
17. You've taken a suit to the cleaners that you plan to wear for a coming special occasion. When you go to pick it up, you find that there's a hole in it. You say...	I planned to wear that this weekend. Aren't you people responsible enough to do something about it?	____
18. You are having trouble filling out tax forms and don't know exactly what information you need. You say...	I really must be dumb, but I don't know where to begin with this.	____
19. A friend promised to come to visit you and then failed to show up. You call and after a few minutes of social conversation, you say...	I understood that you were coming to visit me, but you didn't come. I'm really disappointed that you didn't come to see me.	____
20. A good friend calls and tells you she wants you to have a tupperware party. You don't want to do it and say...	Oh gee, Fran, I just know that Jerry will be mad at me if I say "yes." He says I'm always getting involved in too many things. You know how Jerry is about things like this.	____
21. You are at a meeting of seven men & one woman. At the beginning of the meeting, the chairman asks you to be the secretary, you respond...	Why should I be the secretary just because I'm the only woman in the group?	____
22. Your coworker is about to leave on a business trip and tells you he ran out of cigarettes and borrowed your last pack. You say...	You really are inconsiderate. Surely you know that leaves me short.	____
23. You are in line at the store. Someone behind you has one item, and asks to get in front of you. You say...	I realize that you don't want to wait in line, but I was here first, and I really would like to get out of here.	____
24. It is your turn to clean the apartment, which you have neglected to do several times in the last month. In a very calm tone of voice your roommate asks you to clean up the apartment. You say...	Would you get off my back!	____
25. A friend often borrows small amounts of money and does not return it unless asked. She again asks for a small loan which you'd rather not give her. You say...	I only have enough money to pay for myself today.	____

3. Goals and steps of assertive behavior

A. GOALS

1. In any assertive behavior, some specific goal is involved.

   a. To establish a relationship with someone you want to know, or to change or end a relationship
   b. To express your feelings, beliefs, or opinions
   c. To state an objection or point of view in opposition to another.
   d. To set limits for another person in regard to what can be expected or demanded of you.
   e. To obtain something you want.

B. PRELIMINARY PREPARATION

1. Build internal feeling of self-worth: I respect myself. I am a worthy human being. As a human being, I have basic human rights. In regard to this situation, (_____), I have these specific human rights (_____). I will respect my rights as much as I respect the rights of others.

2. Define specific goals of the assertive behavior: What exactly do I want to accomplish? What behavior do I want changed? What do I want to get across?

3. Consider what the other person is feeling: How can I show respect for the other person? What are the other person's motives, etc.? Try to give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

4. Plan the content of the assertive behavior:

   a. Respect or empathy for the other person
   b. Respect for self; "I" statements
   c. Goal statement: specific action desired

C. IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

1. Review steps 1-4 above

2. Practice some form of relaxing: deep, slow breathing. Tensing, tightening, and relaxing muscles

3. Visualize and practice nonverbal part of message: body posture, eye contact, facial expression. All nonverbal messages should say the same thing as the verbal message

4. Voice and tone also congruent with verbal message.

4. FORMAT FOR ASSERTIVE RESPONSES

A. Refusing Requests (Saying "NO")

RIGHT
An assertive person has the right to refuse requests.

1. CLARIFY - what it is you are being asked or invited to do. Use active listening responses (i.e., ask how, what, why questions; paraphase)

2. EVALUATE - request (invitation). Allow yourself time to weigh short-term effects against the long-term.

3. EMPATHIZE - with person making request (invitation) (i.e., "I understand its importance;" "I'm sure the party will be fun").

4. ASSERT - your feelings on the request. (SAY "NO")

5. OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE - i.e., "Perhaps Nancy can help you," or "I would like a raincheck on that."

B. The Broken Record Technique: When a person does not accept your assertive refusal and resorts to high-pressure tactics, use this technique. Simply become a broken record.

RIGHT
An assertive person has the right not to succumb to high-pressure tactics.

1. Repeat - your original assertive refusal each time the person tries another manipulation
2. Resist Temptation - to answer "WHY?" or to respond to possible insults
3. End the Conversation - or change it to another topic if the person does not run out of new material or if you tire of it

C. Expressing Anger

RIGHT
An assertive person has the right to express anger.

1. Express the Positive Side - (i.e., "I know you want to help me stick to my diet").

2. Direct Your Anger to the Issue - rather than the person

   a. Take responsibility for your feeling and desires by using "I" statements (i.e., "I get angry when you tease me about my weight").
   b. Avoid using "YOU" directed statements (i.e., "You're so inconsiderate and unfeeling").

3. Make a Direct Request - stating what you want in the future (i.e., "I'd like you to stop talking about my weight").

4. Ask for Cooperation - with your request (i.e., "Would you be willing to do that?").

D. Asking for Things

RIGHT
An assertive person asks for what she/he needs.

Make a direct statement of what you want (i.e., "May I borrow your car next Tuesday?").

RESPONSIBILITY

An assertive person graciously accepts a refusal.

1. EMPATHIZE - with the other's view (i.e., "I can understand your reluctance. Perhaps I can ask Susan").

2. REINFORCE - an assertive refusal (i.e., "Thank you for telling me "no" in such an assertive manner. I feel comfortable asking you for favors because I know you can be honest with me").

5. GUIDES TO ASSERTION

1. In order to be assertive, you must consciously define your values, priorities, and expectations.

2. Identify your self-defeating thoughts and substitute positive thoughts.

3. Stop, think, then speak.

4. In important situations, do not hesitate to express your opinions, thoughts, and ideas.

5. Express your feelings directly rather than withholding them, or expressing them indirectly.

6. Be honest and genuine about your thoughts and feelings; do not feel compelled to "say the right thing."

7. Express compliments and affectionate feelings spontaneously.

8. Use "I" when expressing yourself.

9. Communicate your needs to others directly.

10. Let others get to know you by telling them about yourself.

11. Be sensitive and respectful of the rights and feelings of others --consider consequences of your actions.

12. Listen and consider what others say.

13. Accept responsibility for your mistakes.

14. Be flexible and willing to compromise in negotiable situations.

15. When criticizing, include specific events, expectations, constructive alternatives, and positive consequences.

16. Speak slowly and clearly — be understood.

17. Allow your voice to say what you feel.

18. Look at people when you speak to them.

19. Allow your face to reflect what you feel.

20. Make gestures that emphasize what you feel.

21. Assume a posture that says what you feel.

6. GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT ASSERTIVELY

When we feel mistreated, we are well advised to make our objections on the spot. By making them, we clarify our own view of the difficulty. Failure to make objections is a sanction of the other person's right to mistreat us, a sanction likely to harm us more than the mistreatment itself.

Basic Rules

1. Face-to-Face - Complain to the person you think is harming you, not to anyone else.

2. Privacy - To keep the complaint from becoming a win-lose situation where sides are taken, avoid an audience.

3. Space - Allow the other person the physical space, time, and emotional space to deal with what you have presented him/her.

4. One at a time - Have enough respect for the other person to limit what you give out.

5. Conciseness - Think through your complaint thoroughly so that you don't lose the meaning in a flood of words.

6. Feasibility - Your comments will be constructive only if they relate to behavior the other person can change.

7. Avoid Sarcasm - Contempt and fear are main motivations for sarcasm; these are blocks to communication.

8. No Apology - Don't apologize for your complaint after you make it; it detracts from your message and may renew your doubts about your right to speak on your own behalf.

9. Rehearse - Practice your assertive complaints.

10. Here and Now - Avoid words like "always' and "never." They focus on the past; you want to look at what is happening now and in the future.

Components

- Respect, concern for the other person
- Respect, responsibility for self - "I" statements
- Specificity - clearly, behaviorally indicate what you want or don't want. Avoid labeling the other person

* **Remember**, if you can not be specific about what you want, how can the other person figure it out?

VI. INTERVIEWING

A. Before the Interview

Job Search Documents

You know your job target and have considered companies that need the type of skills and qualifications you possess. It is now time to develop your own personal sales kit. The kit consists of the written documents that you develop as a means to win you interviews with potential employers:

the resume
the cover letter
the employment application

What Is A Resume?

A resume is a summary of an individual's educational and work experience qualifications. For the employer, the resume is a means of comparing and screening applicants for hiring; for the writer of the resume, it has one major function: to get you an interview so that you can demonstrate your qualifications and sell yourself to a potential employer.

A resume is necessary -- on all career levels and for all kinds of jobs. Even if you are never asked to present a resume to an employer, the exercise of having prepared the resume has prepared you to be more knowledgeable and to easily present yourself and your qualifications.

In spite of its necessity a resume is probably the most difficult of your job search documents to prepare. The problem lies not in an inability to list qualifications, but for many there is a hesitancy to write or talk about oneself. There might be gaps in your work history or shortcomings in your educational background. You must realize that it would be a rare individual who has no weak points that need to be played down and that all of us, too, have strong points to accentuate. Remember, the job interview primarily hinges on your communication skills and the topic is you. A resume thoughtfully and carefully developed will prepare you to discuss yourself and will give you the confidence you need to be comfortable with the situation.

In planning your resume, you just need to select the style you feel best compliments your job qualifications. There are primarily two types of resumes: the chronological and the functional.

The chronological or general resume lists, describes and dates your jobs and educational experiences separately. Each item is

listed in reverse chronological order, working backwards from your most recent experience. This is the most common approach and is best used by those with uninterrupted work histories.

The functional resume explains your work experience (both paid and volunteer) in terms of the skills utilized, primarily selecting those skills which relate to the job you are now seeking. This format emphasizes your interests and abilities and is a good choice for someone applying for a first job or for a position in which the related job experience is minimal.

Where it would best highlight your qualifications, a combination resume, borrowing from both the chronological and functional forms, may be used. The combination resume names and describes your primary functional skills then follows with a chronological listing of your most recent and relevant positions. This style offers an opportunity to creatively present your experience and may be developed so as to compensate for gaps in work history.

You need to choose the resume format that allows you to most favorably present your job strengths. The resume must be brief and concise, preferably one page; but certainly no more than two pages. Given such constraints, you need a style that will quickly spell out your case to an employer and will entice him to personally meet with you to discuss the position. There is no set formula, so select the resume format you feel most comfortable with.

The Resume

(1) Planning

a. Before writing a word, put yourself in the proper frame of mind to "sell" yourself. You need to psych yourself into believing that you-and you alone-are the perfect individual for the job. Your attitude will be apparent in the document you prepare and a positive, confident personality is certainly a favorable one.

b. Secondly, assemble the material you will need to complete the task of writing your resume. While you will certainly need paper and pencils or pens, you will also need knowledge about yourself. Your personal inventory completed earlier should provide you with the core of information you need. Research sheets you have completed on prospective employers would also prove helpful.

c. Finally, be sure you have familiarized yourself with the materials you have compiled. Let "yourself" be a topic you can easily write about and later, in the interview, easily discuss.

(2) Paper

In its completed form, the resume should be typed on 8 1/2 by 11 inch white bond paper. The document should be free of errors. Copies may be printed or xeroxed, if a quality copy can be obtained.

(3) Presentation

As earlier presented, you first need to decide whether you will follow the chronological, functional or combination resume style. Once this is determined, you can play with specific layout arrangements that might enhance your resume and draw more attention. The positioning of headings, white space and indentions can add interest and eye appeal and can also make the document more easily readable. After choosing a pattern, be certain to follow it throughout the resume.

(4) Identification

The sole intent of a resume is to identify and present you. Be certain your name, address and telephone number are prominent on the page. Preferably, this information should be centered in all capitals at the top of the document. For the sake of clarity, you should also identify the job objective. By establishing the position toward which your resume and your career goal is directed, you have left no doubt in the employer's mind as to why you are presenting the resume and for what you wish to be considered. It is a minor detail that says a great deal about your preparation and organizational skills. It may be argued that the stated job objective limits the use of the resume for presentation to different employers and for different positions; but with the use of a word processor the objective can be altered without having to re-write the entire document.

(5) Positive Approach

The necessity of a confident outlook and positive attitude have already been emphasized. Not only must an optimistic mood color your entire product, but specific means of demonstrating this attitude should be included. Choose words that are positive in tone. All descriptive statements concerning your past experiences should start with positive action verbs or adjectives that express positive personal characteristics. A sample listing that you may wish to draw from is included.

Of equal importance in setting the tone for your resume is the positioning of your strongest qualifications. If your educational background is of primary relevancy to the job, place this entry ahead of the listing of your work history. Likewise, in explaining functional skills, elaborate on

those in which you have the greatest degree of competency. In other words, stress your strongest "selling points".

(6) Education

In presenting your educational qualifications, you begin with the highest level attended. For all institutions listed, give the school name and location (city & state). If you completed a program of study, name the degree and the year in which it was received. If no degree was awarded, omit the dates of your attendance and simply state the name of the school, its location and your major area of study. Grade point averages are generally not listed, but may be included if they are particularly impressive. Other optional entries are personal or career-development courses which relate directly to the job or which are particularly well regarded.

(7) Experience

The manner in which this topic is treated will depend on the type of resume you have chosen to write. If using the chronological approach, you will need to list your present or most recent job first and work backwards. The information to be included consists of the dates of employment, your job title and a brief listing of duties and responsibilities. If you have selected the functional resume, you will need to determine those skills to be highlighted and list them in order of their significance to your job objective. After stating each skill you should describe how and/or where it was utilized, citing illustrative duties performed. Examples of each treatment are provided in sample resumes.

(8) References

An employment reference is someone who can recommend you as a good candidate for the job you are seeking. They should be familiar with your past work performance or with your personal character strengths. It is not necessary that you include letters of reference with your resume. You need only to indicate that "References will be provided upon request". Be certain, however, that those you name are agreeable to the task prior to using their name as a source of recommendation. In order to list references for a prospective employer, it will be necessary to have their complete address and telephone number. Also, advise them fully of your job objective and provide them with any additional pertinent data.

(9) Cover Letter

A cover letter or letter of transmittal should accompany <u>any</u> resume you send to a prospective employer. While the

content of such letters will be discussed later, it should be made clear that this step is a must. The cover letter gives you an opportunity to draw special attention to yourself, your qualifications and your resume. Without it, your resume may never receive the special attention it deserves.

(10) Review

Your resume needs to be a perfect document - anything less may reflect poorly on you and your workmanship. Check your resume carefully for errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation. Also review its content for any omissions in your work history or educational background. It might be a good idea to have a member of your support group critique your resume in order to get a more objective assessment. Regardless of the inconvenience, make all necessary changes and corrections. The resume has an important job to do and errors should not be allowed to detract from its content.

POSITIVE-ACTION VERB LIST

ability to
accomplished
achieved
adept at
advised
analyzed
arranged
assigned
assisted
attended
authorized
bought
budgeted
built
catalogued
clarified
communicated
completed
composed
conducted
contributed
controlled
coordinated
corrected
created
delegated
demonstrated
decreased
designed
desire
determined
developed
devised
directed
documented
effectively
engineered
established
evaluated
excellent
exercised
exhibited
familiar with
formulated
furnished
gained
graduated
guided
handled
hired
improved
implemented
increased
initiated
inspected
installed
instructed
interviewed
invented
investigated
involved
judged
knowledge of
led
liaison between
made
managed
manufactured
marketed
member of
met
mobilized
operated
ordered
originated
participated
performed
planned
prepared
produced
promoted
proposed
provided
published
purchased
qualified
raised
recommended
recruited
reduced
reported
responsible for
reviewed
satisfied
scheduled
selected
served
skilled
sold
staffed
started
submitted
successfully
supervised
supplied
taught
trained
traveled
utilized
wrote
worked

POSITIVE-QUALITY ADJECTIVE LIST

able
accurate
capable
competent
mature
administrative
executive
stable
positive
successful
qualified
proficient
efficient
consistent
knowledgeable
experienced
productive
effective
thorough
vigorous
original
versatile
well-rounded
resourceful
judicious
extensive
complete
responsible
special
professional
academic

The Cover Letter

Regardless of the style chosen, resumes are basically similar - they explain in concise terms your work history and educational background. Something then, must be used to draw attention to your resume and that something is the cover letter. This is the tool you can use to demonstrate your qualifications, your character and your creativity.

No resume should be sent or taken to an employer without a cover letter. It is your means of introduction and for that reason should be particularly well written, interesting and convincing enough to gain you access to an interview. Like the resume, the cover letter needs to be brief - no more than four or five paragraphs. But it should not mirror the resume in content. In other words, do not repeat data, but instead expand on your qualifications for the particular job you are seeking.

The cover letter which follows offers suggestions on content:

218 Austin Street
Barton, TX 28513
November 18, 19XX

Mr. John P. James
Barton Business Products
515 Main Street
Barton, TX 28501

Dear Mr. James:

The opening paragraph of your cover letter should state the position or the type of work for which you are applying. You should also indicate the source of information or the specific interest which led you to apply with this particular organization.

Here you make your power play - why you are right for the job. You will need to show an understanding of the work of the company and of the particular position and explain why you are both interested and qualified. Where appropriate, you might offer academic background, work experience or other achievements as credentials.

Since you will not want to repeat data found on your resume, you should now refer the reader to the resume you have enclosed.

Now is the time to directly ask for the interview. Show some flexibility in the times and dates on which you would be available to interview, but be certain to indicate that you will follow through in an effort to learn of a response to your request. It would, nonetheless, be appropriate to repeat your phone number, giving the company an opportunity to contact you first. Finally, close your letter with a statement showing again your interest in the job and in hearing from the company.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith

While the resume may be appropriate for use in applying with a number of different companies, a personalized cover letter should be submitted to each employer and should be targeted to each position. Of utmost importance is the need to direct the letter and the resume to the correct person: the individual in the company who does the hiring. And be certain to use the individual's name and title. This final task can usually be accomplished with a telephone call to the company, questioning the switchboard operator or receptionist as to whom you should direct your letter. If this fails, however, be diligent in your research. It would be unfortunate to waste all of the energies involved in preparing your resume and cover letter only to have them reviewed by the incorrect person.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR
COVER LETTER

*Prepare a typed copy on quality bond paper, 8 1/2 X 11 inches.

*Personally direct your letter, but be professional in tone.

*Project a confident, courteous, likable image.

*Be creative and interesting, but follow a business letter format.

*Be certain the final copy is error free.

*Link your qualifications to the needs of the company.

*Directly bid for an interview.

The Application Form

Many companies, especially those smaller in size, have no formal application forms or procedures. But the job hunter needs to be prepared in the proper methods for completing an application form, should it be a requirement for employment consideration. So often the application form is viewed as a formality and as simply a means for a company to standardize the information it receives from job applicants. While this may be partially correct, the significance of the form should not be overlooked. As with any phase of the job search, the manner in which you complete the application form (as well as its content) reflects on you as a potential employee. It is obvious to assume that the effort you put in to preparing a

neat, accurate and complete application form will pay off in assisting your resume and cover letter in doing their job - winning you the job interview.

The best way to prepare yourself for the task of filling out an application form is to practice. If at all possible, call the organization(s) to which you wish to apply and ask that they send you a copy of the application form either to complete ahead of time or to use purely for practice. In some instances, a company may require the forms to be filled out in person. Should this be your circumstance, a similar test run can be achieved by completing the sample form found here.

The first and most important step in completing an application form is to read it in its entirety prior to making the first mark on the page. Application forms differ greatly and regardless of your experience in using them, questions and format will vary. Such a preview of the form will help to avoid duplicating information and will ensure that the data is placed in the appropriate spaces. Prior to completing the form, clarify any questions you may have and be certain you understand and follow all directions.

The sample application form which follows contains those questions commonly found. Use this as a guide in collecting the base data you should need in applying for a position. Most of the information would have been compiled on earlier worksheets in this manual. However, be certain to have the information at your disposal when you apply.

"THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT STEP in completing an application form is to read it in its entirety prior to making the first mark on the page."

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Please complete this application in typewriting or printing. Be accurate and complete. Information you give will not be used for purposes prohibited by law.

PERSONAL INFORMATION Date _____ S.S. No. _____

NAME _____
LAST FIRST MIDDLE

PRESENT ADDRESS _____
STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

PERMANENT ADDRESS _____
STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

PHONE NO. _____ MESSAGE TELEPHONE _____

IF RELATED TO ANYONE IN OUR EMPLOY,
STATE NAME AND DEPARTMENT _____ REFERRED BY _____

EMPLOYMENT DESIRED
POSITION _____ DATE YOU CAN START _____ SALARY DESIRED _____

ARE YOU EMPLOYED NOW? _____ IF SO, MAY WE INQUIRE OF YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYER? _____

EVER APPLIED TO THIS COMPANY BEFORE? _____ WHERE _____ WHEN _____

WORK EXPERIENCE:

DATE MONTH AND YEAR	NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER	SALARY	POSITION	REASON FOR LEAVING
FROM				
TO				
FROM				
TO				
FROM				
TO				

EDUCATION	NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL	YEARS ATTENDED	DEGREE EARNED	MAJOR	MINOR
COLLEGE					
TRADE BUSINESS OR CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL					

SUBJECTS OF SPECIAL STUDY OR RESEARCH WORK _____

REFERENCE: GIVE THE NAMES OF THREE PERSONS NOT RELATED TO YOU, WHOM YOU HAVE KNOWN AT LEAST ONE YEAR.

NAME	ADDRESS	BUSINESS	YEARS ACQUAINTED
1.			
2.			
3.			

APPLICANT STATEMENT:

I AUTHORIZE THE INVESTIGATION OF ALL STATEMENTS CONTAINED IN THIS APPLICATION. I UNDERSTAND THAT MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS IS CAUSE FOR DISMISSAL. I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT MY EMPLOYMENT IS FOR NO DEFINITE PERIOD AND MAY, REGARDLESS OF THE DATE OF PAYMENT OF MY WAGES AND SALARY, BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME WITHOUT ANY PREVIOUS NOTICE.

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

How To Complete Your Application Form

*Use typewriter, if possible, otherwise print or handwrite clearly.

*Follow directions!

*Use the correct lines or spaces.

*Be accurate.

*Be complete.

*Be neat.

*Date and sign the application.

B. The Interview

Once you have scheduled an interview, your work begins immediately--not on the day of your appointment. Successful interviewing requires preparation and practice.

First, record on your calendar the date, time and location of your interview. Note also with whom you are to meet(name and title). It would be a good idea, too, to find the location ahead of time so that you will not be delayed or "lost" when you do go for your appointment.

Punctuality

Be "on time" for your interview and armed with both the written and verbal information you will need. Plan early what you intend to wear and what materials you will need to have with you. Arrive only a few minutes early and certainly not late. If you allow yourself too much waiting time prior to the interview, it may give you the opportunity to get nervous and it may cause confusion for the interviewer and his staff.

Appearance

It goes without saying that you should be clean and neat. Likewise, conservative dress and appearance are correct in any office setting. Blue and gray are probably the most reliable colors to choose, but, regardless, your style should be professional and should blend with that normally found in the organization. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum.

Take extra care in grooming yourself for the interview and in selecting your wardrobe. Your appearance is the first impression you will make on the employer. If it's a poor one, you may find that qualifications are not enough to overcome the initial assessment the employer has made of you. On the other hand, a good first impression will set a warm, congenial atmosphere for the rest of your meeting.

Support Materials

Know your subject! You are the subject of the interview and you should be thoroughly versed with the topic. By now, you have prepared your materials packet--your resume, cover letter and application form. Have the material with you and be prepared to talk freely and easily about it. If you have only recently prepared your resume, you are most likely quite familiar with its contents. A practice interview with a friend or member of your designated support group will help to make you even more comfortable in discussing it.

MATERIALS PACKET
-Resume
-Letters of recommendations or list of references
-Pens/pencils
-Samples of your work, if applicable
-List of your qualifications
-Questions you want to ask
-Required certificates, licenses, etc.

INTERVIEW DON'TS
-Be Late
-Be seated, without invitation
-Take a friend
-Smoke
-Chew Gum
-Offer limp handshake
-Be long-winded

Communications Skills

Verbal:

The heart of the interview is your ability to communicate. At best, the interview is a stressful, challenging (even uncomfortable) situation. But it is one for which you can be verbally prepared and rehearsed.

You are now well advised of the information you need to take to the interview. The manner in which you deliver that information is what we must now concern ourselves with. First, remember that the interview is a professional meeting and should totally be conducted in a businesslike approach. Personal information or problems should not be a part of the discussion. However, if your interviewer solicits such information, respond briefly and as you see fit. In other words, don't be rude but give out only the amount of information you feel is needed or warranted.

In beginning your interview, be certain to address your interviewer by name. If you have not already been introduced, state your own name as well and your purpose in being there, i.e., the specific position in which you are interested. From this point on, demonstrate enthusiasm in what you are doing and confidence in yourself and your qualifications. Even confidence and positivism can be rehearsed. Consider the requirements of the job you're seeking and practice phrases which will explain to the interviewer why you would like the work and why you would be especially well qualified.

Communication Tips
*Be concise. Answer question completely, but don't be long-winded. Rambling projects nervousness on your part and it may cause you to give unnecessary and unwanted information.
*Be pleasant. Demonstrate to your interviewer that you are friendly and have a sense of humor. Don't tell jokes, but show that it's easy for you to get along well with other people.
*Be honest. Don't tell more than you want the interviewer to know, but do not deliberately lie, or exaggerate about yourself or your accomplishments.
*Be aware of your goal. Let it be your responsibility to keep the interview on track. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce yourself to the employer and to link your qualifications to the job that needs to be filled. It is also your opportunity to determine if the job and the company are right for you, so give information, but also ask what you need to know.

Nonverbal:

What you don't say, but instead convey, through body language often speaks louder than your words. Be aware of the attitudes you may be expressing in your nonverbal communication.

To the greatest extent possible project a relaxed impression. Being well prepared for the interview can go a long way toward making this possible. Remember, too, that you are interviewing the company and that you are not the only one on the "firing line".

A smile is the best technique for lessening your tension during the interview.

*Eye contact. Look at the person with whom you're speaking. It demonstrates your confidence and your interest in what is being said.

*Maintain good posture. Again, you'll look confident, alert and capable. Slouching, on the other hand, projects boredom and laziness.

*Listen. Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying. Remember you need to leave the interview with a great deal of information about the job. Also, you want to hear and understand the questions being asked of you.

Interview Closure

Prior to the end of the interview, be certain you have fully summarized your qualifications and that you are aware of the procedures the company will use in making a hiring decision. Once this has been done, the interview needs to be drawn to a pleasant close. Watch for steps that the interviewer will take in closing discussion. For example, "Do you have any further questions?" If no such clues are given, suggest yourself that you believe you have asked all the questions you need to and ask if there is anything else the interviewer would like to discuss.

As you leave the interview, thank your interviewer by name for his time. Continue to show your interest in the position and, if necessary, clarify any follow-up activities that have been discussed. Similarly, as you exit the office, thank any support personnel (secretaries or receptionists) who have assisted.

Sample Interview Questions

Be prepared to give good answers to your interviewer. Below are questions you are likely to be asked. Practice your responses, keeping in mind the following guidelines.

(1) Stress your accomplishments and skills.

(2) Relate your accomplishments and skills to what you can do for the company.

(3) Listen carefully--understand the questions and answer specifically. Don't be too brief or too long-winded.

(4) Be honest.

(5) Exhibit a calm, relaxed behavior.

(6) Be pleasant in your speech and attitude.

(7) Maintain good eye contact with you interviewer.

Why do you want to leave your present position? or
Why do you want to return to work now?
How did you get into your field?
Does your present employer know you are seeking a job change?
What job are you really working toward over the next few years?
How much money can you live on? or
What salary do you expect?
Why did you contact me?
How do you think you would fit into our company?
Why have you held so many jobs?
Why do you want to change fields now?
For what reasons did you leave past jobs?
What is your family status?
What do you like best about your work?
Do you have any outside income?
Well, what can I do for you?
Tell me about yourself.
What are your strengths? weaknesses?

Evaluating Your Interview

Regardless of the outcome of your interview, you should immediately take steps to evaluate your performance. This should be done early after the interview while questions and circumstances are fresh in your mind. A sample evaluation form follows:

INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

Name of Organization _____

Date of Interview _____ Name of Interviewer_____

Address _____ Telephone _____

1. List questions you were asked.

2. What questions did you fail to answer adequately?

3. What skills or qualifications did you fail to mention?

4. What information regarding the position and/or the company do you still need to know?

5. Rate yourself either weak, average or strong on the following:

appearance _____ nonverbal communication _____
qualifications _____ attitude _____
support materials _____ punctuality _____
verbal communication _____

6. List information you learned that would help you in making a decision to accept this position.

7. Is there a follow-up interview? Yes _____ No _____

If yes: Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

Interviewer _____

8. Do you have any follow-up materials to submit? If so, list. (Example: references, transcripts, licenses.)

Follow-up Activities

1. The Thank-you Letter

Evaluating your interview is not enough. Persistence on your part in showing an interest in the job you have interviewed for can pay off handsomely. If you have been requested to submit additional support materials, a follow-up letter is an obvious means of transmitting the data. However, in every interview situation, a thank-you letter should be sent to the interviewer. Such attention to detail speaks well for your enthusiasm and for your sense of responsibility. It also places your name before the employer one additional time.

2. The Hiring Decision

Probably the toughest part of the job search process is waiting to learn from the company if the job offer will be made to you. As indicated earlier, you should clarify with your interviewer prior to the interview's close the process which the company will follow in making a decision. Likewise, you should leave yourself room to investigate your progress with the company along the way. In doing so, you will feel at liberty to telephone the employer and to question the status of the hiring process. If done with enthusiasm, and not over-indulgence, this can be helpful in advancing your cause. It can also keep you more attuned to the situation and less frustrated with the waiting game.

511 Maple Street
Yonkers, NY 09876
January 30, 19XX

Mr. Robert Hines
Manager
L. R. Smith Company
P.O. Box 4616
Yonkers, NY 09876

Dear Mr. Hines:

I appreciate the opportunity of meeting with you on January 29 to discuss a payroll management position with your firm. After learning more about your company and its demand in the area of payroll management, I feel very strongly that I have the necessary training and experience and would be an asset to the organization's goals.

Again, thank you for your time. I would be pleased to be a part of the L. R. Smith Company and I look forward to learning of your hiring decision.

Sincerely,

Susan Riley